



Conservation Conversation

Summer 2017 - Volume 30, No. 2

Robert Sweitzer, Recognized at Statewide Conference

(Harrisburg, PA) – Conservation District staff, state officials, and legislative partners convened in Harrisburg to honor conservationists during the PA Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. (PACD) and State Conservation Commission's 70th Joint Annual Conference. The awards luncheon took place July 12 at the Red Lion Hotel, Harrisburg, PA.

During the luncheon, Centre County Conservation District (CCCD) Manager Robert Sweitzer was honored. Sweitzer was nominated by the CCCD board for the "Conservation District Employee Excellence Award." This award is given to a conservation district employee for his or her outstanding efforts that have furthered the activities and accomplishments of conservation districts on a statewide basis.

In his 27 years as district manager for the Centre County Conservation District, Sweitzer's expertise in environmental stewardship has allowed him to serve in many leadership roles at the local, regional, and state level. He served four years as the secretary of the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, and has served on the Headwaters Resource Conservation and Development Council for over 25 years.

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He is an active participant at PACD regional and statewide meetings, and a long-time member of PACD committees. Significantly, Sweitzer has led Pennsylvania Envirothon efforts as an active member of the Pennsylvania Envirothon Committee and Board of Directors for nearly 30 years. In his current role as Pennsylvania Envirothon Board Secretary, he works with representatives of the international Envirothon organization to ensure the state's annual participation in the North American Envirothon. His many efforts have significantly furthered the activities and accomplishments of conservation districts at the local, state, and international level for over 30 years.

Chairman Rob Shannon (left) presents the award to Robert Sweitzer



Mission Statement

The Centre County Conservation District is a committed, professional agency functioning as the primary local source of assistance to all individuals and organizations who benefit from the county's natural resources that we collectively strive to sustain and improve.

After the Storm. . .

For those of us who live near a stream, severe rain storms (such as the one in October 2016) or major snowmelts can deposit a lot of wash-out material in yards, basements and homes. In the unfortunate aftermath, the stream through your property may also look much different than prior to the storms – banks may have eroded, streams may have “jumped the banks”, and there could be a lot of debris scattered about. As a landowner you have options for reclaiming these areas; however, certain activities in and around the stream are regulated and require some planning beforehand. While not all inclusive, the following is provided as a reference for your use prior to working in or near a stream.



One of the first steps is to identify what has happened to the stream and where. Streams want to meander, and depending upon factors such as location and your preference, some flooding changes to the stream could be left alone. Flooding debris found in or near the stream or culvert may be organic or man-made. Organic materials such as rock, sediment, logs and branches are commonly deposited by the receding floodwaters in yards or a nearest choke point such as a culvert. Also contributing to the debris pile can be man-made materials like lumber, tarps, bricks, or even your neighbor's gazebo. This deposition, combined with the force of the water moving through the stream channel, may have also eroded or cut into the stream banks causing the stream's natural location to become de-stabilized. If the stream runs through a culvert or under a bridge, the debris may have “stacked” up causing the water flow to compromise the culvert or affect the stability of the bridge abutments. (*NOTE: During such flooding events, situations where your home is in danger should be addressed immediately and then followed-up upon.*)

Once the extent of damage has been assessed, you should then determine if your proposed work is a regulated activity in need of a permit.

What stream activity is regulated and why? Any change- as in digging and/or filling of the natural stream channel as well as its floodway is regulated usually needing a permit or other “approval” prior to doing work. Some examples include: digging or filling to relocate the stream, filling in the stream banks or filling the floodway to “level” it or keep high water out of it. “Fill” used here refers to rock/soil/concrete rubble or a combination of these items that can be compacted in place and change the way the stream flows or floods after placement. A stream's “floodway” is generally the adjacent areas of the channel itself that carry the bulk of the flood flow during flooding conditions- assumed to be 50' from top of both banks except in locations where more detailed information exists. Therefore, another way of describing the “zone/area” of regulated ground is 100' plus the width of the stream channel from top of bank to top of bank. Often this “zone/area” will vary as the channel bank to bank width transitions between wide and narrow portions.

Why is this zone around a stream regulated? There are many reasons but for the main point of this article, it is regulated for the safety of the public, as well as for the preservation and protection of the natural environment of the stream and surrounding floodway- to minimize destructive or other impacts from these sensitive areas. Filling in the stream channel and/or its floodway can damage or remove from use critical areas for wildlife and change the way the water floods a given area upstream and/or downstream as well as the area impacted during high water events.

However, there are a few instances where a permit isn't needed. Removing woody or man-made debris is OK provided equipment remains out of the stream and the stream banks or channel are not manipulated either with the equipment or hand-held digging implements. The DEP may also issue emergency permits authorizing stream work in response to unique situations. The Conservation District and/or DEP can assist you in determining if your proposed activity may need a permit, either via a phone call or site visit. Lastly, besides the DEP, other agencies like the Fish & Boat Commission and the Army Corps of Engineers may also be involved in the permitting process.

Once a permit has been obtained or in the few instances one is not needed, following best management practices and (if applicable) permit conditions is recommended and can ensure that your work is in compliance with the Clean Streams Law. For example, gravel bars removed from the stream should be placed in an upland area, away from the stream and its floodway, where it won't wash back into the stream. Otherwise, placing stream bank piles or berms parallel to the channel are considered dikes, which may be generally unstable and at a higher risk for washing back into the stream. Ultimately, this could create repeated gravel bar build-up for you or a downstream neighbor.



Gravel bar deposit remaining after flood event. Removal would require a permit, as this is within the “stream and its floodway” regulated zone.

While we can't control Mother Nature, there are some routine maintenance practices that you can implement that may lessen flooding damage. Passive maintenance would involve not mowing the stream bank vegetation, or at least not using herbicides along the stream bank. Trees and grasses act as an anchor and an erosion resistant surface for stream bank soils during flood events. Proper installation and use of headwalls and endwalls at culvert locations can shore up the culvert and encourage water to continue flowing through, rather than around the culvert. Headwalls/endwalls can also act as a protective barrier to flowing water having direct contact with the fill material used around the culvert pipe. Checking the opening and exit of culverts and bridges to ensure they are clear to accommodate the passage of flowing water can assist with minimizing overtopping and damaging such crossing locations as well as the adjoining road/driveway the crossing services. Clearing trees, shrubs, and other vegetation within the channel bottom can also encourage stream flow to stay within the existing streambanks; always cut and remove as close to the ground as possible without any digging. Over time the roots will deteriorate on their own and the above ground vegetation that is removed will have less chance of slowing the water and catching other material leading to blockages and water coming out of the channel during non-flooding events.

Remember, after a flooding event addressing these steps prior to making changes to, or working within the stream – (1) site assessment and emergency determination (2) game plan (3) research permitting (4) implement and follow-through, can aid in keeping your project in compliance. Fact sheets for gravel bar removal (3150-FS-DEP2103), Emergency Removal of Debris from Streams (3150-FS-DEP3044), and General Permits for Work in Waterways, Floodways, and Wetlands (3150-FS-DEP3055) are available for view at DEP's website – www.dep.pa.gov. The Centre County Conservation District can be reached at (814)355-6817 for questions regarding stream activities.

Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads (DGLVR) Program Summer 2017

The Centre County Conservation District received 6 applications from 4 applicants (Centre County Municipalities)-- who have attended *Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance for Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads* training workshops, making them eligible to apply for funding through this program. After a site visit of each, all 6 were selected by Centre County Conservation District's Quality Assurance Board (QAB, consisting of representation from the PA Fish & Boat Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Conservation District) and recommended for funding and subsequently approved by the Centre County Conservation District Board for a total of over **\$126,500**.

The 6 approved projects, which include 1 paved/sealed Low Volume Road (LVR) site, are with the following applicants:

Penn Township (2)
Potter Township (1)
Boggs Township (2)
Walker Township (1)

Low Volume Roads (LVR) eligible projects include: paved or sealed roads with an average daily vehicle count of 500 or fewer vehicles. Dirt and Gravel roads, regardless of traffic volume, remain eligible for funding as in the past since the start of this program.

The Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program wishes to promote a better public road system with a reduced environmental impact—with a focus on utilizing recognized “Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance (ESM) Practices”. Funding is limited to public roads; owned and maintained by municipalities or other state or local public entities. Applicants wishing to participate must have personnel that both design and oversee their proposed project(s) and have recently attended (within 5 years) an *Environmental Sensitive Maintenance for Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads* training workshop.

Often, an effort to better manage drainage (both from the road surface and keeping offsite runoff from draining onto or across) is key to proper maintenance and will help to minimize impacts to our waterways- resulting in a longer lasting smooth road and nearby streams being less impacted. This benefits both the road owner with less frequent maintenance as well as our natural environment.



Contact the Centre County Conservation District for more information regarding the Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program or check out the Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies web-site at: www.dirtandgravel.psu.edu for future workshops & registrations.

Ann Donovan retires

Board members and coworkers wish Ann Donovan the very best in her retirement! Ann started with the Centre County Conservation District as an Ameri-Corps volunteer in 1999. In 2001, Ann became our first and only Watershed Specialist when Growing Greener funding from the PA Department of Environmental Protection enabled Conservation Districts to add Watershed Specialist positions. Ann has worked tirelessly over her career assisting watershed groups, coordinating stream restoration projects, assisting private landowners, municipal officials, elected officials and others. Ann's passion for education has helped the Conservation District reach thousands of children and adults as she taught lessons to groups about watershed stewardship and soil and water conservation.

*Thank you, thank you,
thank you Ann for your
leadership and dedication.*

Happy trails, my friend.

*Photographed on
the Allegheny River*



Centre County Conservation District Helps Farmers During Mandatory Farm Inspections

Pennsylvania and surrounding states have specific goals to reduce the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment that is discharged from their streams into the Chesapeake Bay. Although Pennsylvania has made progress with valuable reductions in these pollutants, achievements to date have been deemed insufficient by the EPA to meet water quality expectations. In January 2016, DEP announced a Chesapeake Bay "Reboot" strategy to improve water quality across the State and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. The strategy is focused on nutrient reduction by meeting EPA's goal of inspecting 10% of all farms in the Bay Watershed each year.

This past year, officials from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the County Conservation Districts inspected farms across the state, checking to make sure each farm had their state required Manure Management Plans and/or Agricultural Erosion and Sediment Control Plans. If farmers did not have the required plans, then they were given a deadline to obtain them. The ultimate goal is for farmers to implement these plans with best management practices to reduce polluted runoff, keeping the valuable nutrients and sediment on the farm.

The Centre County Conservation District completed the required 50 farm inspections for the past fiscal year. Thankfully, the District was able to help almost all the farms inspected with obtaining their required farm plans. The District had a Growing Greener grant that paid private consultants to write the plans needed for each operation. The farmer only had to pay \$50. Although the District has exhausted the funds in this current grant, we have applied for another grant to hopefully continue the successful program. The District will conduct 50 additional farm inspections this coming fiscal year.

Watershed News, Ann Donovan, Watershed Specialist

Members of the Centre County environmental community have been working hard to promote land and water stewardship during these last few months. All groups continue to meet on a regular basis, most of them monthly, and are working on various projects.

The Bald Eagle Watershed Association and the Canoe Club of Centre County completed a third canoe/kayak access along the Bald Eagle Creek. This project, funded by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, is located at Dowdy's Hole. Over the last several years, with financial assistance from the WPC, volunteers have created a local water trail beginning in Milesburg at the Community Center, stopping at the Curtin Bridge in Boggs Township and now adding a stop at Dowdy's Hole in Howard Township. The projects, overseen by Ed Bowman, have been successful because of the many volunteers, including staff from Boggs Township, who contributed labor, equipment and time.



Access at Dowdy's Hole

ClearWater Conservancy sponsored Centred Outdoors this summer, inviting people of all ages and fitness levels to explore nine outdoor destinations around Centre County. The destinations included Black Moshannon State Park, the Barrens to Bald Eagle Wildlife Corridor in Halfmoon Township, Bald Eagle State Park, Talleyrand Park, the Spring Creek Canyon, the Poe Paddy Tunnel, Millbrook Marsh, the PSU Arboretum and culminated in a climb up Mount Nittany. This program, funded by the Centre County Community Foundation, was a great opportunity to learn to appreciate the special natural places of Centre County.

ClearWater is in the final stage of the Slab Cabin Initiative, raising funds to purchase the development rights to two important properties, the Meyers and Everhart farms, in the Slab Cabin watershed. At the time of this newsletter they were very close to reaching their goal of \$2.75 million. The purchase will help protect the community's drinking water and conserve the valuable resources on 300 acres of agricultural land.

The Spring Creek Watershed Association continues to make progress on the Spring Creek Atlas project. The purpose of the Atlas is to help the public understand the factors that have affected and continue to influence the quantity and quality of water resources in the watershed.

The Spring Creek Watershed Commission is continuing to explore the formation of a Spring Creek Watershed Plan. At each meeting they host a guest speaker who shares their expertise about watershed issues. The meetings can be viewed on C-Net, channel 7.

The Penns Valley Conservation Association has completed, in partnership with the Centre County Conservation District, two important agricultural projects, one on the Buck Farm along Elk Creek and one at the Rossman farm in the Penns Creek Watershed. In addition to the implementation of agriculture best management practices on farms in the watershed PVCA conducts environmental education programs for Penns Valley students. Once again, they provided rich learning experiences for Penns Valley students at individual schools and at Muddy Paws Marsh Wetland Center.

Congressman Glenn "GT" Thompson recognized the Spring Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited at the 44th Annual Dinner and FUNraiser. He read a proclamation that was presented to the US House of Representative in recognition of the Chapter's accomplishments and for receiving the 2016 Gold Trout Award as the nation's most outstanding Chapter.

John Ford of the US Fly Fishing Team, Phil Thomas from National TU and county students installed instream habitat structures on Thompson Run and the Romolo Branch of Marsh Creek. Both installations are parts of ongoing projects undertaken by the three partners over the last several years.

The Water Resource Monitoring Project committee hired Lexie Orr to be the new coordinator of the WRMP project. She will be spearheading the annual report, slated to be completed this summer.

Members of the Centre County Chapter of PASEC continue to be diligent in monitoring streams throughout the county. Each month a team tests the stream water and posts the results on the PASEC web site. The results, organized by stream name, may be viewed at www.ccpasec.com.



The Edible Landscape garden at Talleyrand Park is thriving this year, thanks to volunteers who maintain it. An additional garden has been planted in the Park in close proximity to the Edible Landscape.

The new pollinator/butterfly garden is a satellite of the Tudek Park Snetsinger garden and a joint partnership among the Talleyrand Park Committee, the Bellefonte Garden Club, and PSU Master Gardeners.



In addition to supporting the activities of environmental organizations in the county, the District conducts its own programs. Education outreach this past season included involvement with nearly 1,500 people. We found ourselves at Black Moshannon and Bald Eagle State Parks, in county libraries, at Muddy Paws in Spring Mills, at various streamside sites and in classrooms at PSU and area elementary schools. We made a presentation to the Bellefonte Borough Council about our restoration efforts in Talleyrand Park. The stream rehabilitation work, scheduled for this summer, has been postponed until next August.

The District has been working to assist residents who incurred damage from the October 2016 storm, first by facilitating the Emergency Watershed Protection Program with NRCS and then by working with the county Emergency Management Agency. The EWP provided funds to qualified landowners to make necessary repairs to their properties. The EMA program will assist with debris removal from yards.

143rd Annual Centre County Grange Fair

The Annual Grange Fair was held on Aug. 18-26, 2017. Pictured is Bob Sweitzer setting up the CCCD display booth in the Emporium Building, photographed by LeDon Young. LeDon is the Merchandise Committee Officer for the fair and oversees the activities in the Emporium Building. The CCCD display consisted of informational handouts and complimentary seed balls.



Conservation District provides Farmers with Planning and Engineering Assistance needed for Ag BMP Implementation

The Centre County Conservation District recently completed a third Chesapeake Bay Program Grant that provided planning and engineering assistance to farmers seeking to install agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs). Although farmers may receive financial assistance for construction costs of agricultural BMPs, they may still need to pay a licensed Professional Engineer to design, inspect, and certify complicated structural practices such as a manure storage or roofed heavy use areas. Private engineering assistance helps get projects on the ground, as federal and state agency engineers are tasked with so many projects. Engineering costs can be a substantial burden on the farmer. Since July 2014, the Conservation District has assisted 7 farm operations with approximately \$50,300 in private sector engineering assistance, a necessary component of BMP implementation.

Another requirement of many financial assistance programs is the first step in BMP implementation – PLANNING! Farmers may need a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) to qualify for certain financial programs. These plans involve preliminary engineering, in addition to Nutrient Management and Conservation Planning. These plans can cost anywhere from \$5,000 - \$10,000+ depending on the operation. The Chesapeake Bay Program grant helped farmers obtain these plans from private sector planners and engineers. Since July 2014, the District has assisted 12 farm operations with approximately \$45,700 to develop these required comprehensive plans.

Agricultural Best Management Practices Implementation Grants

The Centre County Conservation District continues to partner with different organizations and utilize funding from different grant sources to construct Agricultural Best Management Practices on farms throughout Centre County. Current projects include two farms in Walker Township, two farms in Halfmoon Township, one farm in Gregg Township and one in Penn Township.

Beef Operation in Halfmoon Township

Pictured to the right, footers being poured on a beef operation located in Halfmoon Township. The Centre County Conservation District, utilizing Growing Greener Grant funds, is partnering with the Natural Resources Conservation Service on this project. The project includes construction of a 3,840sqft Roofed Heavy Use Area, 20,000cuft Roofed Manure Stacking Facility, Roof Runoff Controls, Underground Outlets, Water Supply Pipeline, Watering Facilities, & Access Lane. On this same farm in 2015 the Centre County Conservation District partnered with ClearWater Conservancy and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to install 3 stream crossings, streambank fencing, stabilize eroded streambanks, and plant a riparian forested buffer.



Photographed below is a recently completed project on a small beef operation located in Penns Valley. Cost-share funds were provided by Penns Valley Conservation Association through their Watershed Restoration and Protection Grant.

Beef operation in Gregg Township - Heavy Use Area Protection



Before construction runoff from the Heavy Use Area had a direct impact to a Penns Creek tributary.

The tributary is located in the background of the photo in front of the large trees.

After BMPs are installed the area is now stabilized.

The concrete surface and the 2 foot curb enables easier manure collection.

The 4 foot wall, located in back, provides an area for temporary stacking of manure.



Drain holes were placed in the curbing to

direct manure laden runoff into a designated filter area.





Beef operation in Walker Township

This photo shows one of three spring fed watering facilities installed on a Walker Township farm. 3,000 feet of pipeline delivers water to the 3 troughs which serves 43 acres of pasture divided into 4 paddocks. 12 acres of cropland were fenced and will be converted to pasture after corn harvest. Streambank fence was installed to exclude livestock from 2,779 linear feet of stream and protect 3.2 acres of riparian buffer.

Amish and English Dairy/Equine operation in Walker Township

Livestock have been excluded from 2,950 linear feet of stream, creating 3.7 acres of riparian forest buffer along Little Fishing Creek and an associated tributary. The project included 4 stream crossings, 3 of which were built with 8-inch cattle slats due to the volume and velocity of the stream.

BEFORE



AFTER



The project included 450 feet of animal walkways; the majority built 16ft wide to accommodate a 4-horse team. Livestock were provided an alternate watering source with 3 freeze-proof watering troughs. A milk house waste and silage leachate collection system was installed to accommodate a diesel powered pump system with a tank to collect and take the waste directly to the field.

Milk house Waste and Silage Leachate Collection System under Construction



2017 Centre County Envirothon

The Centre County Conservation District sponsored the 33rd annual Centre County Envirothon on May 10, 2017 at Bald Eagle State Park. Eleven teams from Central PA Institute of Science and Technology, St. Joseph's Catholic Academy, Penns Valley Area, Bald Eagle Area, Bellefonte and State College Area high schools participated on a beautiful spring day. The Envirothon tests students' knowledge of the following five subject areas: Aquatic Ecology; Forestry; Soils and Land Use; Wildlife; and Agricultural Soil and Water Conservation, the current environmental issue topic for 2017.

Breaking a streak of 17 consecutive championships for Bald Eagle Area high school, a team from Penns Valley Area high school captured the County Envirothon title. The Penns Valley I team scored 418.5 out of a possible 500 points. Team members Taran Rowles, Nicholas Kubalak, Jared Kines, Luke Snyder and Conner Dix also achieved the highest scores at the Forestry, Soils and Land Use, Wildlife and Current Issue stations. The Bald Eagle Area "Woodpeckers" team placed second with a score of 362.5 and also achieved the highest scores at the Aquatic Ecology station. The Penns Valley II team placed third with a score of 325.5. John Howell is the Penns Valley Area advisor.



The Penns Valley I team represented Centre County at the Pennsylvania Envirothon on May 23 and 24 at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown and placed 14th of the 64 county teams participating. Penncrest High School, Delaware County won the Pennsylvania Envirothon championship and also brought the North American Championship back to Pennsylvania during the National Conservation Foundation North American Envirothon held at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland in July.

"Healthy SOILS Are Full of Life!"

Soil is at the bottom of the food chain, yet it is the cornerstone of life



The District sponsored the 2017 annual conservation poster contest as part of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's 12th goal of quality education which states: "To help every student acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to maintain the quality of life in a balanced environment." Barb Ivicic coordinated the annual District Poster Contest. This year's poster contest theme was **Healthy SOILS Are Full of Life!** Posters were judged in three divisions by grade. First place posters were sent to Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts ("PACD") at the end of June for the statewide competition. Cash prizes and a Certificate of Appreciation were awarded to the top three posters in each division at the county level.

<u>1st Place Poster Winners:</u>	K- 1	Jolene Witherite	Bellefonte Area School District
	Grade 2-3	Emma Roos	Bellefonte Area School District
	Grade 4-6	Brynn Wright	Our Lady of Victory Catholic School
<u>2nd Place Poster Winners:</u>	K-1	Kaylee Knepp	Bellefonte Area School District
	Grade 2-3	Aalyn Cernuska	Bellefonte Area School District
	Grade 4-6	Avery Brainard	Our Lady of Victory Catholic School
<u>3rd Place Poster Winners:</u>	K-1	Jackson Myers	Bellefonte Area School District
	Grade 2-3	Maddy Fallon	Bellefonte Area School District
	Grade 4-6	Ashley Laskowski	Our Lady of Victory Catholic School

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CENTRE CO. COMMISSIONERS (814) 355-6700
CENTRE CO. PLANNING (814) 355-6791

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September
09/03 Crickfest - Coburn Park
09/04 Labor Day-Closed
09/07-10 Nitany Antique Machinery Show
09/13 Board Meeting

October
10/07-8 Dutch Fall Festival - Aaronsburg
10/09 Columbus Day
10/11 Board Meeting
10/31 Halloween

November
Farm City Dinner - TBA
11/08 Board Meeting
11/10 Veteran's Day - Closed
11/23-11/24 Thanksgiving

December
12/13 Board Meeting
12/25-26 Christmas Holiday

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